
Title: Romantic Selections I

Author: Elizabeth B. Browning

- IX -

Can it be right to give
what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath
the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and
hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips
renunciative
Through those infrequent
smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations?
O my fears,
That this can scarce be
right! We are not peers
So to be lovers; and I
own, and grieve,
That givers of such gifts
as mine are, must
Be counted with the
ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple
with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on
thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love--
which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee!
let it pass.

- XIV -

If thou must love me, let
it be for nought
Except for love's sake
only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile--
her look--her way
Of speaking gently,--for a
trick of thought
That falls in well with
mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease
on such a day"--
For these things in
themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change
for thee,--and love, so
wrought,
May be unwrought so.

Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's
wiping my cheeks dry,--
A creature might forget
to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and
lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's
sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on,
through love's eternity.

- XXII -

When our two souls stand
up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent,
drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening
wings break into fire
At either curved point,--
what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us,
that we should not long
Be here contented?
Think! In mounting higher,
The angels would press
on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb
of perfect song
Into our deep, dear
silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Beloved,
--where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men
recoil away
And isolate pure spirits,
and permit
A place to stand and love
in for a day,
With darkness and the
death-hour rounding it.

- XXIX -

I think of thee!--my
thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines,
about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and
soon there's nought to
see
Except the straggling
green which hides the
wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be
it understood
I will not have my
thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better!
Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a

strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set
thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of
greenery which insphere
thee,
Drop heavily down,--burst,
shattered everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy
to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy
shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee--
I am too near thee.

- XLIII -

How do I love thee?
Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth
and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when
feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being
and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level
of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun
and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as
men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as
they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the
passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with
my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I
seemed to lose
With my lost saints,-- I
love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my
life!--and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee
better after death.